



A publication of the U.S. Department of Energy Carlsbad Field Office

**July 2013** 

#### **WIPP Quick Facts**

(As of 7-28-13)

11,477

Shipments received since opening (10,791 CH and 686 RH)

87,856

Cubic meters of waste disposed (87,513 CH and 343 RH)

168.346

Containers disposed in the underground (167,663 CH and 683 RH)

\*CH - Contact-handled transuranic waste; RH - Remote-handled transuranic waste

# WIPP senior managers recognized for support of military service



Joe Franco



Paul Shoemaker



Ned Elkins

The New Mexico Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) presented its Seven Seals Award to three senior WIPP managers at its June recognition event in Carlsbad, N.M. The honorees included Department of Energy (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) Manager Joe Franco, Sandia National Laboratories-Carlsbad Programs Group Manager Paul Shoemaker and Los Alamos National Laboratory-Carlsbad Operations Manager Ned Elkins.

Shown above with each of the WIPP recipients are Assistant Adjutant General for Air and Commander of the New Mexico Air National Guard Colonel Steven J. VerHelst; N.M. Army National Guard Chief of Staff Colonel Timothy Paul; and Eddy County, N.M. ESGR Chairman Tony Renteria.

The National ESGR seeks to develop and promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees. The Seven Seals Award recognizes those who significantly advance the ESGR mission.

"As a veteran and a former member of the U.S. Navy, I recognize the nation's need for – and the important support provided by – the Guard and Reserve," Franco said.



Dr. Abraham Van Luik

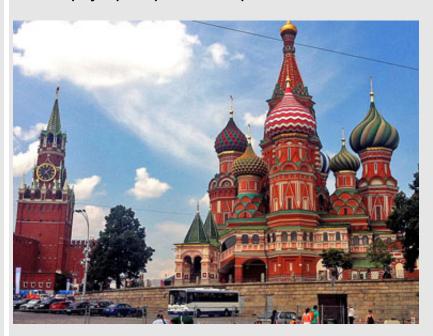
### A lesson learned in international travel

Dr. Abraham Van Luik considers his recent involvement in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) peer review to be a positive experience, but it had a rough start. His itinerary had him entering Russia in the city of Samara. However, upon arrival, he was denied entry into the country and detained for just over 24 hours until he was able to board a flight to Prague in the Czech Republic and then fly to Moscow.

The issue was his visa. Since he was traveling on official government business, he had a government visa that only allowed entry via one of 12 cities. Apparently, the United States has a similar requirement for entry into our country for official travelers from Russia, too.

During that time, he had access to a lounge area, food and water most of the time, but on several occasions when other flights were departing during the night, he was locked inside a small holding area for up to two hours at a time. He was in contact with the Department of Energy and the American Embassy, which was helpful for making arrangements for his alternate flight plans

### To Russia with Van Luik CBFO employee participates in IAEA peer review



Do Russian Federation deep-well injection sites meet the new International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) advisory standard for radioactive wastes? That was the question a group of seven experts were tasked with answering as part of an IAEA peer review. One of those experts was Dr. Abraham Van Luik of the Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO).

Today, Van Luik works at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, so he deals more with disposal of solid waste in a deep geologic repository mined in salt. But he's certainly familiar with the issues addressed. With more than three decades of experience in evaluating the safety of deep geologic disposal facilities, he was a contributor to the implementation guidance for the new IAEA standard published in 2011 that served as the basis of the peer review. Participation by the United States is consistent with its policy to assist in assuring the safe disposal of radioactive waste in other countries, so Van Luik joined experts from France, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and Austria for an eight-day visit to Russia.

"Our mission was not to agree or disagree with this method of liquid disposal," said Van Luik, "but to see what could be done by the Russians to demonstrate compliance with those requirements in the new standard that could be applied to this waste disposal practice."

Russia has been actively disposing of liquid low-level and intermediate-level wastes by means of deep-well injection at three locations. The practice started in the 1960s, about 50 years ago. The wells go down between 650 and 1,300 feet into a sandstone aquifer with considerable clay content that is separated from two overlying aquifers by practically impermeable clay layers at each site. Water from the injection zone and the middle aquifer is monitored to assure there is no contamination moving to where it should not go. The slow release of radioactive elements from the clay particles they are bound to, slow water

Van Luik takes it as a learning experience. While the issue wasn't identified by anyone in advance, it's certainly something Van Luik and the DOE passport office will be aware of in the future. The delay in arrival meant he missed an opportunity to visit a liquid radioactive waste injection site near Dimitrovgrad, but he was in Moscow for the first day of discussions between the IAEA review team and the managers and scientists representing the organizations responsible for assuring the safety of these facilities.





movement in the injection zone and radioactive decay minimizes risk at increasing distances from the injection sites.

The new standard is specifically for solid waste, not liquid, so the Russian Federation requested the IAEA peer review with the idea that it would provide guidance on how their safety arguments could be improved to satisfy the requirements of the new standard that can be interpreted to be applicable to this waste disposal practice.

Van Luik spent several weeks reading and formulating questions in advance. By the time they left Russia, he and his colleagues had collaborated in English on an initial report that eventually will be provided to their Russian hosts. Those results, however, are considered confidential until the Russian Federation decides to allow the IAEA to make them public.

While the peer review schedule was demanding, Van Luik said the Russians were very hospitable and took the group to see and experience some of the Russian culture. They attended an operatic performance of the Bolshoi Ballet Company, toured the treasure rooms in the Armory of the Kremlin and visited a working Russian Orthodox monastery.



# Sheriff gains insight into WIPP disposal operations



Chariff Coatt Landon recently headed up a

#### **CBFO** selects Office of Business Director

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Carlsbad Field Office (CBFO) announced the selection of William "Bill" Mackie as the Director of the Office of Business.

Mackie's responsibilities for CBFO will include finance, contracting, human resources, security, information management and government information/records to ensure that all federal requirements are being met.

"Bill brings a great deal of experience and expertise to the position," said



delegation from the Eddy County Sheriff's Office (ECSO) that came to do some fact finding about WIPP and our operations. Pictured with Sheriff London (right) are Deputy Arsenio Jones and Chief Deputy Mark Gage.

The ECSO is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for responding to an emergency at WIPP.

#### **Train-the-Trainer Course**

State, tribal and local hazardous materials instructors are encouraged to save the date for an upcoming Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training (MERRTT) Train-the-Trainer course. The Oct. 15-17 course in Carlsbad, NM will provide tools instructors need to teach the MERRTT course to emergency responders.

The course has been reviewed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and is approved by the Department of Homeland Security and the Continuing Education Board of Emergency Medical Services.

For more information or to sign up, call David Lewis at (575) 234-8486 or e-mail david.lewis@wipp.ws.

CBFO Manager Joe Franco. "I'm pleased to announce his selection and look forward to working with Bill in his new position."

CBFO has responsibility for the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) and the National Transuranic (TRU) Program.

Mackie has served as the CBFO Institutional Affairs Program Manager for the past seven years. Prior to joining CBFO, Mackie spent several years working with WIPP while at the Western Governors' Association. He also served in the U.S. Navy for more than 30 years as a hospital corpsman and a medical service corps officer specializing in health care administration. He then joined the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department where he held positions as the Director of Administrative Services and as a Planning and Program Development Chief, which involved the transportation of radioactive waste in the state.

"This is a great opportunity and I am honored that I was selected for the position," Mackie said. "I believe WIPP is very important to the DOE's cleanup mission and I thoroughly enjoy working on the project. I will continue to work hard to help ensure WIPP's success."

Mackie has a Bachelor of Science in Health Care Administration and a Master of Business Administration, with a concentration in Finance, from the George Washington University.





# Los Alamos employees aid Oklahoma tornado victims



Kevin and Jerri McTaggart

Watching newscasts of Hurricane Katrina's devastation, Jerri McTaggart felt compelled to do something. McTaggart solicited donations of food





Above photos provided by Jerri McTaggart. Top to bottom: Devastation caused by a tornado in Moore, Okla.; Unloading the trailer; Volunteers at the relief center; A picture board of pets affected by the storm.

and supplies from local organizations and personally delivered them to New Orleans' needy. That was eight years ago.

McTaggart, a transuranic waste science manager, and her husband, Kevin, a transportation official, both work for Los Alamos National Laboratory-Carlsbad Operations and have worked on the WIPP project for 11 years. Their work supports the National Transuranic Program.

When two back-to-back tornadoes recently struck an Oklahoma City suburb, McTaggart went into action. "I got a phone call from my old neighbor who now lives in Oklahoma and she gave me a list of specific supplies. In a couple of days we had raised \$2,200 and received a 24-foot trailer and filled it with donated items," she said.

The McTaggarts arrived in Oklahoma just days after the first 245 mph twister tore through Moore, Okla. They decided to stop and have dinner before reaching their first designated drop-off point. Watching breaking news of an approaching super storm, they learned that the largest of five tornadoes (2.6 miles wide) had crossed Interstate 40, destroying everything in its path. "We were so lucky that we stopped when we did or we would have been in the tornado's path," McTaggart said.

Their first drop-off point was a pet rescue station. There they learned the other drop-off locations on their itinerary had been destroyed. The pet rescue station quickly became a central hub for supplies to all the surrounding areas. Calls began pouring in from residents in need of supplies and volunteer runners would take pre-prescribed routes to make the deliveries.

"Once we opened the trailer, they told us they could use everything we had," said McTaggart. "One volunteer almost cried when she saw the rakes in the trailer." She noted that the remaining \$138 was donated to AT&T for free phone service for victims of the storm. "We're so grateful to the local businesses and organizations who generously donated goods and money to make the effort possible."



### The U.S. Department of Energy Waste Isolation Pilot Plant

Waste Isolation File Filant

To be added to the TeamWorks update notification list or to submit comments or suggestions, please <u>click here</u> to send us an e-mail message.

To read past issues, visit the **Archives** page.





